

Appl. No. : 10/601,093
Filed : June 20, 2003

REMARKS

By way of summary, Claims 1-20 were originally filed in the present application. Through previous amendments, Claims 21-29 were added. Claims 1, 10, and 18-21 are amended herein. Claims 26 and 29 are cancelled herein. Thus, Claims 1-25, 27, and 28 are pending in the present application.

Amendments to the claims set forth above include markings to show the changes by way of the present amendment, deletions being in strikeout (e.g., ~~strikeout~~) or double brackets (e.g., [[double brackets]]) and additions being underlined (e.g., underlined).

Allowable Claims

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation that Claims 12-17, 24, 25, 27, and 28 were deemed allowable by the Examiner. In addition, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claims 6, 23, 26, and 29 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 1-11 And 18-23 Are In Condition For Immediate Allowance

Claims 1-5, 7-11, and 18-22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over various combinations of Westberg, Cook, and/or Metheny. Applicants respectfully disagree with the characterization of the references set forth in the Office Action and with the rejection of the presently pending claims. Nevertheless, to expedite prosecution of the present Application, Applicants have amended independent Claims 1 and 18 to incorporate the recitations of Claims 29 and 26, respectively. As stated above, the Examiner indicated that Claims 26 and 29 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Accordingly, Applicants have amended Claim 1 to include the recitations of Claim 29. Applicants also have amended Claim 10 to make that claim consistent with amended Claim 1. Thus, Claim 1 is in condition for immediate allowance. Claims 2-11, 22, and 23 depend from independent Claim 1. Claims 2-11, 22, and 23 are allowable as depending from an allowable base claim, as well as for novel and non-obvious combinations of elements recited therein.

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Applicants have amended Claim 18 to include the recitations of Claim 26. Applicants also have amended Claims 19-21 to make those claims consistent with amended Claim 18. Therefore, Claim 18 is in condition for immediate allowance. Claims 19-21 depend from independent Claim 18. Claims 19-21 are allowable as depending from an allowable base claim, as well as for novel and non-obvious combinations of elements recited therein.

No Disclaimers or Disavowals

Although the present communication may include alterations to the application or claims, or characterizations of claim scope or referenced art, the Applicants are not conceding in this application that previously pending claims are not patentable over the cited references. Rather, any alterations or characterizations are being made to facilitate expeditious prosecution of this application. The Applicants reserve the right to pursue at a later date any previously pending or other broader or narrower claims that capture any subject matter supported by the present disclosure, including subject matter found to be specifically disclaimed herein or by any prior prosecution. Accordingly, reviewers of this or any parent, child or related prosecution history shall not reasonably infer that the Applicants have made any disclaimers or disavowals of any subject matter supported by the present application.

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Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the rejections set forth in the outstanding Office Action are inapplicable to the present claims. Accordingly, early issuance of a Notice of Allowance is most earnestly solicited.

Any remarks in support of patentability of one claim should not be imputed to any other claim, even if similar terminology is used. Any remarks referring to only a portion of a claim should not be understood to base patentability on solely that portion; rather, patentability must rest on each claim taken as a whole.

The undersigned has made a good faith effort to respond to all of the rejections in the case and to place the claims in condition for immediate allowance. Nevertheless, if any undeveloped issues remain or if any issues require clarification, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call Applicants' attorney in order to resolve such issue promptly.

Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

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